

THE CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION IN SCOTLAND SINCE THE REFORMATION

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PART I

THE study of the manner of celebrating Communion in the Post-Reformation period is seriously handicapped by the paucity of material upon which to work. A large portion of the records of the General Assembly covering its proceedings from 1560-1616 was consumed in the fire which destroyed the Houses of Parliament.¹ The minutes and registers of lower courts certainly provide ample information regarding the abnormal, but the normal is mostly passed over in silence. Threatened innovations receive profuse attention, and from the controversies occasioned much may be gathered regarding the ordinary practices. The extensive and often minutely detailed diaries of early times contain only occasional and casual mention of Communion. Justifiable conclusions as to prevalent practices, however, may be drawn from single instances, it being unlikely that any congregation would be quite alone in its mode of celebration.

In the time of transition, when the Reformation was being firmly established in Scotland, the English Liturgy seems to have been widely used at first, but it was displaced by the *Book of Geneva* by direction of the General Assembly of 1562. This in turn was superseded by the *Book of Common Order* modelled on the *Book of Geneva*, Knox being the chief compiler and editor. Its use was enjoined by an Act of Parliament in 1564. It did not lay down the law regarding vestments, ceremonial, etc., as in the corresponding English rubrics, but permitted a large discretionary power, leaving much to be determined by usage.² A more or less common pattern was evolved and became standardised, being perpetuated by unwritten tradition. It suffered little alteration even during the Episcopalian regime.

¹ Story : *Church of Scot.*, V, 307.

² Calderwood declares that he, like many others, had not followed its forms for thirteen years.—*Altare Damascenum*, p. 613.

The Reformers suggested in the *First Book of Discipline* that the Sacrament should be held at least four times a year—on the first Sundays of March, June, September, and December. These dates were carefully selected to prevent the celebration taking place on any of the old popish holy days, specially Pasch or Easter.¹ The Assembly of 1562 directed that there should be Communion quarterly in towns and twice a year in the country. Actually no long time elapsed before there were few places in which Communion was observed more than once a year.

I. THE TABLE

The use of a special table on which the elements were placed, and round which the communicants sat, is of ancient date. It is common as early as the second century. Under the influence of Jewish and pagan precedents these came to be called *Θυσιαστήρια*, or altars, and by the time of Constantine their special sanctity was emphasised by their being made of stone instead of wood.² The Scottish Reformers recurred to the primitive practice, seeking in all things to reproduce as closely as possible the staging of the original Supper after the manner of the Early Church. In England during the reigns of Elizabeth and James VI an artistically wrought wooden Communion table was part of the furnishings of the church, being brought for the celebration from the side of the chancel, where it ordinarily stood, to the centre of the chancel or the body of the church. Many specimens of these still exist, as in the church at Canterbury, associated with Chaucer's Pilgrims.

In Scotland, for long after the Reformation, a Communion table was specially constructed—or tables, if needful. Their erection and subsequent removal formed part of the expense of the Sacrament.³ A short cross table, on which the elements were placed and at which the minister and his assistants sat, was sometimes set at the end of the long table or tables, thus making them T or U shaped. As amongst the Puritans of England, the table was often reverently called "God's Board." The tables were placed in the nave or body of the church, or if the church had one, in the chancel or choir at the east end of the

¹ Cf. Act of Assembly, 1645—"Ministers bowing in the pulpit, though a lawful custome in this kirk, be hereafter laid aside, for satisfaction of the desires of Reverend Divines in the Synod of England and for uniformity with that kirk so much endeared to us."

² Coleman : *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, p. 427. Hook : *Church Dictionary*.

³ Edgar : *Old Church Life in Scot.*, p. 138 ; *Mailland Misc.*, II, 333 ; *Records of Burgh Court of Canongate 1573-4* ; *Chronicles of Perth* (Maitland Club), p. 36 ; *Life and Work*, Dec. 1924. In all churches built before 1560 there were chancels—Sprot and Leishman, *Book of Common Order*, LV.

building, which is consequently often referred to as "the Communion yle." An old picture shows a long table standing "mids of the kirk."

The temporary erection of such tables in that position was rendered possible by the fact that there were no fixed seats at that time, and the floor in most cases was bare mother earth. For ordinary services people brought stools with them, if they wished to sit, as many did not, or they hired them from the beadle who kept a stock in hand, therewith handsomely supplementing his meagre wage.¹ For Communion special forms were provided along with the tables. These forms were carefully placed at such a distance from the tables as to make kneeling impossible and thus to frustrate any disposition towards a superstitious observance.²

Up till the middle of the seventeenth century the Communion table was surrounded by barriers or fences, called a travess or flake, to prevent unauthorised persons surreptitiously gaining admission. These were not made so high as to hinder those sitting outside from seeing over them and being spectators of the celebration. The fence itself was guarded by vigilant elders, who supervised and regulated the entrance of communicants to the table through the gates provided at either end.³ During the seventeenth century a permanent small Communion table began to come into use, though temporary ones were still the custom in many places till the eighteenth century and even later.⁴

The *Book of Geneva* directs that the minister is to come down from the pulpit and *sit* at the table. A later injunction of the General Assembly, reaffirming this direction, instructs him to *rise* from the table at the conclusion of the celebration and return to the pulpit. This suggests the query, Did the minister then at that early period *sit* at the table while dispensing the Sacrament, after the manner of our Lord, though, of course, He reclined in Eastern fashion? This is not impossible in view of the express desire of the Assembly to appoint an order which was "most agreeable to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The tables were filled by successive companies of communicants—even up to fifteen or more times. When the period of long-winded and multiplied discourses arrived, and the service was prolonged for hours,

¹ The tables might be hired out for other purposes, as at Colinton in Episcopalian times (1677) when they were let out for penny weddings, and in later Presbyterian times when the Presbytery of Ayr had occasion to forbid their letting out at Fairs.

² The elders at Dundonald are instructed to see "that the furmes be not altered neirer to or farther from the tables" (Kirk Session Records, 1640). By the end of the sixteenth century forms for the ordinary services were beginning to come into use.

³ Stevenson: *Communion at Dunfermline*, p. 5 f.

⁴ Boston's *Memoirs* (Morrison's ed.), p. 360; *Presbytery Book of Strathbogie* (Spalding Club), p. 33. In 1643 the Covenant was subscribed "at the communion table in the kirk of Carnock." (Row, *History*, p. xxiv.)

it was no wonder that there was general anxiety to get an early place at the table. Where there was a crush of attenders, this often resulted in unseemly jostling and irreverent behaviour. The kirk session of Stirling in 1597 animadvert on the great disorder at the last administration of Communion, "the rash and sudden coming to the tabill, the spilling of the wyne, the thrusting or shouting in their passage at the kirk door after the ministrations."¹ The introduction of the pew system about the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth offered a way of escape from these scandalous accompaniments of the sacred rite. The pew desks, or at least a sufficient number of them, were substituted for the traditional tables and covered with the customary white cloths. By this arrangement all might be able to partake together, and confusion and delay averted.

The innovation, however, was not allowed to establish itself without protest and opposition. Indeed, this very practice had formed one of the bones of contention at the Westminster Assembly between the Independents, and specially the Scottish commissioners. The former pressed for the adoption of their custom of sitting in the pews "athort the church" and coming forward to receive the elements from the minister. The Scots stoutly resisted the proposal. Baillie indignantly characterises the practice as "mangling the sacrament,"² and Alex. Henderson says, with regard to the Scottish practice of sitting at a table, the elements being passed from hand to hand, "We, sent from the Church of Scotland, are of one mind on this point. We can hardly part from it, nay, I may add, we may not possibly part from it." The discussion on the whole matter actually lasted for three weeks, one of the longest debates in the Assembly. The upshot was a compromise according to which the communicants were to sit "orderly about the Table or at it." But the Scottish Church held to its view of the matter, and an Act of Assembly of 1645 enjoined that the communicants must come to the table.³

When the innovation of distributing through the pews was brought to the notice of the General Assembly of 1825, it was condemned as being against the law and immemorial usage of the Church.⁴ The practice must already have become widespread to judge from a pamphlet

¹ Kennedy: *Memories of Scottish Services Eighty Years Ago*, p. 66; *Maitland Misc.*, I, 139 f; Glasgow Kirk Session Records, 1644; Shotts Kirk Session Records, May 14, 1646.

² Baillie: *Letters*, I, 68.

³ Nye, the Independent, would have the minister distribute the elements uncovered as a servant, while the communicants, as guests, sit covered.—Baillie: *Letters*, II, 149, 195.

⁴ Sprot: *op. cit.*, p. 132.

published in 1824 by the Rev. John Begg, D.D., of New Monkland, in which he makes a vigorous attack upon it. He contends that the Communion table is really the one place at which the communicants may properly partake, and to confine the people to their pews is to deny them access to the only real Communion table, viz., that on which the elements were set. He offers another consideration which does more credit to his manners than to his judgment when he declares that for fellow-communicants to turn their backs upon one another at a love-feast, as they must do when sitting in pews, was "shocking to the feelings." He forgot that when there was more than one long table, as formerly, that had already unavoidably occurred. The innovation, in any case, resulted in too many advantages for its general adoption to be prevented, and it rapidly became universal.¹

Before passing from the table, I may mention a practice recorded in the City Accounts of Edinburgh of 1626, according to which certain sums were set apart for the provision of flowers for Greyfriars and the other three city churches in the summer season. Presumably they decorated the Communion table. In 1631, £7 Scots is entered as paid to "ye lass yat furnisheit flowers to ye kirkis."² Is it unreasonable to suppose that Edinburgh was not singular in following this practice, and so to infer that the modern comely fashion is really a revival of an early one?

II. THE CLOTH

The use of a white cloth on the Communion table dates from very early times. The first writer apparently to mention it is Optatus, writing in 384; it is also alluded to by Isadore of Pelusium and others. The cloth was called the "Corporale." Isidore says that it was intended to represent the body of our Saviour wrapt in fine linen by Joseph of Arimathea. There was a special blessing or benediction for the Corporale in which the words occur, "sicut in sindone linea et munda sepultam cognovimus carnem D. nostri Jesus Christi." In the English Order of Holy Communion the minister is directed to cover what remains of the consecrated element with a fair linen cloth. The Reformers, then, were perpetuating an ancient custom in directing that the table be covered with a fair white linen cloth. Similar cloths were also provided to cover the elements before the actual dispensation. For

¹ Leishman says that the pews were at first so constructed as to take the form of Communion tables and allow the communicants to sit opposite one another. At Livingstone the backs of adjoining pews in front swing over towards one another and form tables.

² *Records of Old Greyfriars Church*, pp. 45, 95.

the Reformed Church the cloth conveyed the symbolic suggestion of the purity and holiness required of all who drew near the Lord.¹

It is interesting to note the way in which these cloths, when discarded, were disposed of. The "dayne of gild" of Edinburgh in 1598 is ordered to "gif the auld clayth to the puir wimen in the hospitall to be their courtches," courtche being a woman's cap or kerchief (Fr. *couvre-chef*). The length of the new cloth to replace these is given as "4 score auchteen ell, all linen, to make 8 lang buird claithes and 4 schort claithes with aucht basing claithes to cover the breid."² At Deskford, the discarded cloth is given to provide grave clothes for a "poor stranger woman," while the wood of the Communion table is utilised for her coffin.

It would seem that churches occasionally allowed the cloths to go out of use for a period, in all probability owing to their state of disrepair. Some time might elapse before they were replaced, and so people might become accustomed to their absence. The session of Montrose in 1705 mentions that "as yet they want a communion cloth," and one is ordered.³ But there might be cases where a fresh one was not provided, perhaps because of the expense, and the congregation fell into the habit of celebrating without one. Anyhow, the custom did not remain universal. As is well known, a large number of churches, descended from the Secession, do not use the cloth on the pews. When and why this abandonment of a practice, sanctified by hoary tradition as well as enjoined by the law of the Church, took place, apparently deliberately, I have not been able to discover. No allusion to the fact or the reason appears in any documents I have consulted. In the case of the Secession churches, the Praying Societies may have been originally responsible, though I can find no ground in their records for saying so. They met in small companies in private houses, and, when they did not partake at a neighbouring church, would celebrate Communion round the house table where the ordinary meals were partaken, and so far as I know, that would not be spread with a white cloth. Such a linen cloth was not an inexpensive article in those days and poverty may have been sufficient reason for its disuse at Communion. What was originally a matter of necessity or expediency became a matter of custom. Or may its absence date from the introduction of the pew system? The pews used by communicants were by many regarded as not being an

¹ *Maitland Misc.*, II, 34 (Canongate Register, 1598); Burns, *Church Property*, p. 176 f. Weinzel (*Certain Tractates*, p. 77) challenges the Reformers to produce Scripture warrant for the use of such cloths. Reference was sometimes made to the cloths of blue and scarlet which were spread over the table of shewbread and the altar.—*Num. IV et passim*.

² *Records of Edinburgh*, 3 Nov. 1598.

³ Burns: *Church Property*, p. 174 n.

extension of the Communion table and therefore as not requiring to be covered. It is possible that they may not in any case have been covered, as not having the appearance of tables; the controversy regarding the legitimacy of their use for this purpose may have reacted in bringing about their sharing in the seemingly covering.

What is true of only a small minority of Churches in Scotland is, it seems, universal in Ireland and Canada. In a paper read to the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society in 1898, the Rev. R. G. Murchison of Canada laments the absence of cloths in his country, but offers no reason for their discontinuance. The Highlanders of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, however, still continue to use them.

Is it possible that a contributory reason for their disuse in some quarters may be found in the very probable soiled condition of the cloths after a succession of tables on which wine was frequently spilt in the crushing and jostling of those in haste to find places?

III. THE ELEMENTS

Controversy has raged round these as the central features of the rite. As already stated, the aim of the Reformed Church, as early expressed through its General Assembly, was to reproduce as closely as possible the original Supper. But various views might be, and were, taken as to the exact significance of the substance of the elements. Was it necessary to decide what exactly was the nature of the bread and wine used by our Lord, and to employ facsimiles? Or was it not essential to the efficacy of the Sacrament? Did Jesus intend those exact substances, as He used them, and no other, to be the only possible or permissible media through which sacramental grace might be conveyed, or did He employ them simply because they were there on the supper table—the customary provision for the Passover feast? And did He give them a symbolical meaning which He might have given to other substances under other circumstances? Does it essentially matter what are the exact elements so long as they are set apart, consecrated to this symbolical sacred use? For example, would the Christian natives of the Islands of the Pacific fail to receive the spiritual nourishment, specially associated with the Sacrament, because they used yam and cocoa-nut milk for lack of bread and wine?—just as in Norway and Sweden ale was, and maybe still is, sometimes substituted for the wine. Queries like these lie at the root of much controversy on the manner of celebrating the Sacrament.

(a) THE BREAD

According to Pardovan, leavened wheaten bread was to be preferred, but in the days when wheat was sparsely grown, and none might be procurable, oatmeal might be used.¹ Specially in the south-east of Scotland, as in Galloway, Ayrshire, and Dumfriesshire, but also in the north, as in Moray, unleavened bread was used in the form of thin flat cakes of shortbread. In the seventeenth century great care was taken in the preparation of the bread. Elders often travelled considerable distances to select the flour to be used,² the bread was specially baked, and was sometimes cut with a special silver knife.³ It was generally served in slices, which were sometimes provided with a crusty strip at one edge by which they might be held as they were passed from hand to hand. A much larger fragment than is now customary was partaken, if we may judge from an instance of one slice sufficing for only six communicants.⁴

The fashion of cutting the bread into dice seems to have been followed in some places, *e.g.*, in Aberdeenshire (*Journal of Queen Victoria*, and Edgar, p. 149), but became common during the Episcopal regime in accordance with the edict of the Perth Assembly. The Reformers, of course, had been familiar with the Roman Catholic practice of using wafers. After the restoration of the Presbyterian polity, the fashion continued to hold its ground, especially in the north. It has again become common and appears likely to gain universal favour.⁵

(b) THE WINE

The kind of liquor used varied from age to age and from place to place. Calvin had said (*Instit.* IV, C. 17, par. 43) *Panis sit fermentatus*

¹ After Culloden, according to Bishop Forbes (*Journal*, p. 182), the Episcopalian clergyman used oatcakes and whisky. "Grey bread" was sometimes used. In 1772 the Presbytery of Tongue reported to the Synod of Caithness and Sutherland that the scarcity of bread prevented the Sacrament being administered. The same excuse was given for Creich and Dornoch in 1782, and for Durness in 1784—"owing to the extraordinary scarcity of the times."

² Gillespie: *English Popish Ceremonies*, pp. 204, 107. Spalding: *Memorials of the Troubles*, I, 241 f., II, 184 f.

³ *Statistical Account of Kirkcudbright*, 1792-1807; Kilmartin Kirk Session Records; Kildonan Kirk Session Records.

⁴ Stevenson: *Communion at Dunfermline*, p. vii. Edgar: *op. cit.*, p. 144. A special kind of bread is still baked in Wigtonshire for Communion.

⁵ In 1645 the bread was passed round in slices or "shaves," according to an Act of Assembly of that year which appoints that "the communicants divide it amongst themselves after the minister hath broken and delivered it to the nearest." Cf. Calderwood's description of Communion, 1623, as it had been observed for 60 years.—

an azygmus; vinum, rubrum an album; nihil refert. Pardovan, echoing him, asserts that "the kind of wine is immaterial, but that wine of a red colour seemeth most suitable."¹ He also counsels that where wine of any sort is not to be had, some "composure (concoction) as like unto it as could be made" should be supplied. Graham declares that still greater freedom was allowed or taken, ale being in very early days occasionally used sacramentally, as it was in Norway and Sweden.² But he gives no reference, and I have been unable to discover any direct evidence. A case could hardly be founded on the words of a man accused at St Andrews in 1560 of blaspheming the Sacrament who derisively exclaimed that he could "make as guid a sacrament as they make by hallowing a loaf and a pint of ale."³ That could scarcely be taken to imply an allusion to a local custom of using ale. Large quantities of the beverage certainly appear in accounts of Communion expenses, but that was probably for the consumption of officials and office-bearers, for whom meals were provided during the day.⁴

The liquor universally used up till the end of the seventeenth century or thereabouts was claret or a light wine. The Roman Catholic example of mixing water with the wine was widely followed, especially in the north, where the practice seems to have been almost universal since the Reformation.⁵ On the other hand, that treatment of the wine was in other places apparently jealously guarded against, probably being regarded as a remnant of Roman Catholic superstition. At Dunrossness in Shetland, and in Kirkmaiden, Wigton, *e.g.*, the wine was actually brought to the table in corked bottles, which were opened in face of the congregation, for which no other reason seems likely except that it was to guard against the wine being mixed with water.

More than the modern "taste" was sipped from the cup. It must have been heartily quaffed, to judge from the total amount consumed, as witnessed to by the Communion accounts of kirk sessions and town councils. Twenty-six gallons of wine were needed for a Communion in Edinburgh in 1578, while in 1594 the tacksmen in teinds of Glasgow were ordered to provide a hogshead of good wine for the city's celebration. At Montrose in 1653 76 pints Scots were ordered at 18s. a pint, the Scotch pint being equal to 3 quart bottles of to-day.⁶ At Auchterhouse in 1692 a suggestive payment of 3d. is made to Dauvit Wyddie for

Altare Dam., p. 777 f. In the Westminster Assembly there was actually much discussion as to whether a communicant, after breaking a piece off the bread, "must lay the rest in the dish again or give it to his next fellow."

¹ Pardovan: *op. cit.*, p. 98.

² Edgar: *op. cit.*, p. 147.

³ *Register St Andrews Kirk Session*, 1560, p. 44.

⁴ Lorimer: *Early Days of St Cuthbert*, p. 78.

⁵ Dowden: *Annotated Scottish Communion Office*, p. 43.

⁶ Burns: *op. cit.*, p. 599 f.

“gording the barrel that holds the Communion wine.” In the West Church, Edinburgh, each elder carrying a cup was followed by another bearing a flagon from which to replenish the cup’s rapidly consumed contents.¹

Calderwood had lent the weight of his authority to this sacramental imbibing. In his tract, *The Pastor and the Prelate*, 1628, he exhorts the pastor and congregation to “eat and drink that they may find themselves refreshed sensibly,” adding that the Prelate “hath turned the refreshment of eating and drinking into a pinched tasting.”² This would suggest that the pendulum had swung somewhat violently to the other extreme from the Roman Catholic form of observance with its denial of the wine to the laity, and its wafer of bread, and that the rite partook now somewhat of the nature of a love-feast. Certainly, Communion at first seems to have been generally taken fasting,³ but that could not have continued to be the case when many would not find a place at the table till well on in the day.

The quantity imbibed, it may be suggested, may have been indicative of, and commensurate with, the feeling that thus was the Saviour to be honoured after the fashion of the day, and His grace the more largely received. A striking story related to me by a friend graphically illustrates and supports this suggestion. A retired army captain in Edinburgh was told by his minister on his first communicating that he must study to honour his Lord in the observance. He quaffed the whole contents of the cup when it came to his turn. On being gently rebuked afterwards by his minister, he said, “Didn’t you tell me that I was to honour my Lord? Could I honour Him by leaving heel-taps in the cup?” It is recorded of Ben Jonson that he drank the whole cup at Communion in token of reconciliation with one with whom he had a quarrel.

After the union of the kingdoms, when prosperity began to enrich what had been a starved country, port wine was amongst the imports which came into Scotland in increasingly large quantities. Its appetising flavour approved itself to a generation which knew not abstinence, and it was not long till this heady beverage began to supplant the weaker and wershier varieties in the sacramental rite. The amount consumed did not diminish, as appears from Church accounts. The dangers of such a seductive liquor so heartily quaffed in creating or strengthening the

¹ Lorimer: *Leaves from the Buik of the West Church*, p. 29.

² Calderwood: *Pastor and Prelate*, pp. 5, 9.

³ Lee: *Lectures*, I, 402. Blair in his *Autobiography* (Wodrow Society), p. 7, tells how at Irvine in 1618 he durst not communicate “having gotten my breakfast . . . for it was then a generally received opinion that the sacrament behoved to be received fasting.”

taste for strong drink especially amongst young people, often very young communicants, by and by began to force themselves upon the minds of many thoughtful folk. In claret-drinking days a case is recorded of a minister so intoxicating himself with wine that "he tried to preach but spoke nonsense."¹ Of course, the wine responsible was not that taken at the table itself, but what was provided for the sustenance of the ministers during the arduous day. But when port wine became the rule, such abuses became a growing danger, specially where, as at Edinburgh, the services of the season were rounded off with a kind of banquet, which approached so nearly a jollification that for decency's sake it had to be discontinued.

It is not surprising, in view of the deplorable drinking habits of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the scandals occasioned by them which kept kirk sessions busy, that voices began to be raised in urgent protest against the use in the sacred rite of that which was so largely responsible, at least amongst the better classes, for demoralising consequences. When exactly the movement for the substitution of a non-alcoholic liquor began does not appear, but the current was running strongly by the beginning of last century, not only in this country, but in England and America, and in all Churches except the Anglican. Individual champions here and there suffered for their convictions, as in the case of an elder, John Murray by name, who in 1841 was expelled from the Relief Kirk, Old Kilpatrick, for asking to be served with unfermented wine at Communion and encouraging others to do so. The Session at first granted the privilege but withdrew it on others making the same request, and divested him of his office. Similar treatment was meted out by ecclesiastical courts to other uncompromising advocates, as *e.g.* Thomas Temple in Edinburgh. So late as 1875-6 the United Presbyterian Synod suspended several elders who declined to communicate in alcoholic liquor, and in 1878 it refused the Motherwell congregation permission to give relief to members who wished to be served with unfermented wine.² The Primitive Methodists gave a strong lead at a Conference at Reading, Berkshire, in 1841, when they used unfermented wine at their Communion service. In America a magazine called *The Enquirer* was issued for a period once a year from Albany, New York, by Edward C. Delavan, in the interests of the movement. The New College Library possesses copies of the issues for 1841-3 inclusive, when it may have ceased to appear. The editor seems to have been a man of high intellectual capacity with large scientific knowledge. He opened his pages to advocates or defenders of both sides, and these

¹ Lorimer : *Leaves*, etc., p. 31. Cf. *Notes of the Tolbooth Church*, p. 38.

² *Report of Public Meeting to promote the Use of Unfermented Wine at Communion* 1875, p. 26.

included many of the most notable medical and scientific experts of the day in America, some of them occupying chairs in the great universities. Everything is said that can be said on either side from every point of view, scientific, social, religious, and exegetical. If the battle had to be fought again, here is to be found an arsenal of artillery and ammunition for all combatants.

In Scotland the temperance forces were at last organised and consolidated largely through the instrumentality of the notable John Hope. He and those who acted with him were extremely concerned that no schism should be occasioned in the Church or in any congregation, and at his suggestion there was instituted a Communion service at which unfermented wine was used.¹ Crowded public meetings were held in the Music Hall, Edinburgh, in 1875, and elsewhere, in support of the plea that the use of unfermented wine in the Sacrament should at least be sanctioned. Congregations here and there had already courageously made the change, as *e.g.* Moray Free Church, Vennel U.P. Church, and St Luke's Established Church, all in Edinburgh. The growing temperance sentiment strongly reinforced the movement. Staunch conservatives like Prof. Watt of Belfast fought tooth and nail against it, and a war of pamphlets raged. The Christian conscience of the Church, however, shocked by such an assertion as that of Prof. Gibson of Glasgow to the effect that when professing abstainers justified themselves in using intoxicating liquor at the Lord's Table, it would be time enough for him to defend his using it at his own table, generally began to be uneasy about the matter. The dangers to youth and to those in whom the craving for drink was active or repressed were frankly recognised. No mere doctrinal contentions, based on exegesis, which, in any case, was questionable, had power to counteract the convincing pleas of Christian love and brotherhood, and the movement is undoubtedly on the way to sweep the country.

IV. PRIVATE COMMUNION

Reference may here be made to the question as to how the Reformed Church in Scotland has viewed private Communion, and especially Communion to the sick. The fact that Calvin, to whom the first Reformers looked for guidance on so many matters, approved of the practice "provided that everything was done as in a church," affords a strong presumption that a similar attitude was adopted by his Scottish disciples. Certainly John Knox is known to have frequently administered the Sacrament in private houses, and George Wishart did so at the breakfast

¹ John Hope: *The Present Position of the Communion Wine Question.*

table of the governor of St Andrews Castle on the day on which he was burned. The Assembly of 1581, indeed, passed an ordinance enjoining that the Sacrament "be not administered in private houses, but solemnly, according to the good order hitherto observed," an ordinance re-echoed by the General Assembly of 1638, as also by the Assembly of 1690, which "discharged the administration of the Lord's Supper to sick persons in their own houses." In each case this attitude is to be interpreted in the light of the historical situation. In view of the formative example of Calvin and Knox, it cannot be understood as condemning the administration of Communion in private houses *in presence of members of kirk session and others*. It is rather a gesture of reaction against the Episcopalian and Roman Catholic practice of the minister or priest *by himself* giving the Sacrament to sick people by way of "viaticum."

In later times unimpeachably orthodox theologians like Dr A. A. Hodge,¹ M'Cheyne of Dundee, and Dr Horatius Bonar, approved of such celebrations. Dr Donald Fraser, of London, in *An Outline of the Doctrine, Worship, Polity, and History of the Presbyterian Church of England*, faithfully represents the Scottish Reformed view in the words: "The Holy Supper is not carried about to the sick as a viaticum; but there is no objection to its observance in a private chamber in cases of long continued affliction, provided that the privilege be not given to one person, but shared by a Christian company, in accordance with the spirit of the ordinance. The Confession of Faith condemns private masses, or receiving the Sacrament by a priest or by *any other alone*." ¹

¹ *Commentary on the Confession of Faith*, c. xxix, where the condition of legitimate celebration in cases of sickness is stated to be that "the officers and a sufficient number of the members of the congregation be present to preserve the true character of the Ordinance as a communion." Cf. *Communion for the Sick*, 1878, by Rev. John Miller, Duns.

